

# Determining the Preparatory Skills of Preschools Based on the Opinions of Teachers and Literature Review

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## **Abstract**

The general purpose of the present study was to determine the preparatory skills of children with developmental disabilities based on the opinions of teachers and the literature. It was aimed to determine the highest priority and secondary level priority preparatory skills based on the opinions of the pre-school teachers. In order to reach this purpose, a survey was developed and administered to the preschool teachers working in schools. After completing the surveys, a literature review was conducted and the preparatory skills in the literature were determined. The similar skills mentioned by the teachers and found in the literature were grouped. The preparatory skills found in this study were similar to those found in the literature.

## **Key Words**

Pre-school Education, Inclusion, Developmental Disabilities, Preparatory Skills.

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Every individual needs to be educated in order to be a part of his/her environment. Just like normally developing children, children with developmental disabilities need to learn many different skills and behaviors in order to be independent in their environments. Early childhood years are especially very important for the individuals with developmental disabilities for them to be accepted among their normally developing peers (Avci & Ersoy, 2002). Preschool years should be well planned for the children with developing disabilities (Varlier, 2004).

If children with developmental disabilities are recognized and placed in preschools to be trained professionally the negative effects of their situations can be minimized (Gomby, Larner, Stevenson, Lewit, & Behrman, 1995; Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993 cited in Lerner, Lowenthal & Egan, 1998). Children with developmental disabilities face a difficulty while they are being placed into a regular preschool as inclusion students (Chandler, 1993).

Inclusion is placing children with exceptionalities into the least restrictive environments by providing the necessary support services (Kırcaalı-İftar, 1992). One of the important aspects of successful inclusion is to determine and teach the preparatory skills to children with exceptionalities before placing them into the regular classes (Atwater, Orth-Lopes, Elliot, Carta, & Schwartz, 1994 cited in Jewett et al., 1998; Guralnick, 2001; Odom & Diamond, 1998).

In the related literature, the preparatory skills are being used as the classroom survival skills and are described as the social/behavioral and adaptive skills (Noonan, & McCormick, 1993; Rule, Fiecht, & Innocenti, 1990; Salisbury & Vincent, 1990). When the child with developmental disabilities acquires these skills, this helps him/her be successful in the inclusion environment, adapt the group setting, learn new skills, and behaviors and gain new friends (Conn-Powers, Ross-Allen, & Holburn, 1990; Hains, 1992; Kemp, & Carter, 2006).

There are many research studies conducted to determine the critical skills in their new environments and teach them before placing the children into the regular classes (Anderson-Inman, Paine, & Deutchman, 1984 cited in Sainato, & Lyon, 1989; Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Fowler, Haines, & Rosenkoetter, 1990; Hains, 1992; Noonan et al., 1992; Rule et al., 1990; Vincent et al., 1980 cited in Noonan & McCormick, 1993).

Children should be taught how to reach natural reinforcers to help him/her generalize the learned skills into the natural environments (Caval- laro, & Haney, 1999; Klein, Cook, & Richardson-Gibbs, 2001). Different researchers suggested various ideas to determine the necessary skills for children with developmental disabilities in the inclusion environments. For example, Sainato and Lyon (1989) suggested making observations in the school environment while Rule and friends (1990) suggested teaching these skills by using effective reinforcers to the children. Besides, it can be said that by teaching the critical skills to children with developmental disabilities the child can easily get used to the environment and his/her friends in the natural environment (Guralnick, 2001; Hains, 1992).

Noonan and McCormick (1993) mentioned that the best people to determine the necessary skills for children to be included into the regular classes should be both the regular and special education teachers. Rule and friends (1990) suggested that the child should be prepared for the regular education class by making the program of the special education class gradually for the student until s/he is ready for the inclusion.

Hains (1992) conducted a study with 11 children with developmental disabilities aged 5-6 years old. The author taught attending to the activity and working independently to the children as the preparatory skills for inclusion. After teaching the skills, the author examined the effects of these skills on completing reading independently. On the other hand, Chadwick and Kemp (2002) conducted a study with 655 special education and preschool teachers by asking them to fill out a questionnaire in order to determine the preparatory skills for the regular classes. Lastly, Kemp and Carter (2005) mentioned the preparatory skills for successful inclusion for children with developmental disabilities.

Inclusive environments in preschool years provide children with developmental disabilities opportunities to gain academic skills faster, and also to learn social, communication, and motor skills by modeling their normally developing peers (Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Kemp, 2003; Odom, & Diamond, 1998). Although the preparatory skills are given great importance in the literature, it is not seen as so important in Turkey yet. This frequently causes difficulties for children with developmental disabilities in the inclusion environments. Depending on the need for such studies in the country, the present study was planned.

The general purpose of the present study was to determine the preparatory skills of preschools based on the opinions of teachers and literature review. Depending on this general purpose, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What were the skills with highest priority regarding the inclusion of children with developmental disabilities?
2. What were the skills with secondary level priority regarding the inclusion of children with developmental disabilities?
3. Were there any similarities between the preparatory skills that the teachers mentioned and the literature?

### **Method**

The study was conducted descriptively via administering surveys to the participants. Descriptive studies aim to describe the situation at the time that the research was conducted (Creswell, 2005).

### **Participants**

The study was conducted with 48 preschool teachers who were volunteered to be the participants of the study. All the participants were women. Thirty three of the teachers were graduated from four year faculties, seven were graduated from the distance education preschool teacher training program, and the rest had two year degrees from faculties of education.

### **Data Collection Material**

A questionnaire was prepared by following the rules of survey preparation. The questionnaire consisted of nine closed-ended and three open-ended questions.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected by the first author by visiting the schools of the teachers and asking the questions orally. The answers of the participants were marked or written on the questionnaires by the first author.

## Data Analysis

The surveys were read by the authors and a draft interview coding form was developed. After developing the draft interview coding form, the appropriate items were marked for each participant on every question by the authors independently. After markings were completed, the markings were compared by the researchers in order to examine the consistency between the researchers. Depending on the discussions, some changes were realized on the coding form. In order to determine the inter-raters reliability, all the surveys were read and categories were marked for all the questions of the participants by the researchers independently (Richards, et al., 1999; Tekin & Kırcaali-İftar, 2004). The reliability for the highest priority skills was between 84% and for the secondary level priority skills was 86%.

## Results

Depending on the data collected from the participants of the study, the highest priority and second level priority skills were; (i) attending to the group activities, (ii) following the directions, (iii) having the self-help skills, (iv) completing the motor skills, (v) expressing him/herself, (vi) paying attention to the activities, (vii) showing appropriate behaviors in the class, (viii) obeying the rules of the classroom, (ix) completing the activity appropriately, and (x) having cognitive skills appropriate for his/her development.

The skills which were reported to be important by the participants of the study were found to be critical skills in the related research studies as well (Anderson-Inman et al., 1984 cited in Sainato & Lyon, 1989; Chadwick & Kemp, 2002; Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Fowler et al., 1990; Hains, 1992; Kemp & Carter, 2006; Kemp & Carter, 2000; Noonan & McCormick, 1993; Rule et al., 1990; Vincent et al., 1980 cited in Noonan & McCormick, 1993).

In the present study, after collecting the data from the participant teachers, a literature review was conducted by the researchers in order to find the critical skills in the related literature. The skills found in the literature and the skills mentioned by the participants were put together and a list was constructed as: (i) following the directions, (ii) attending to the group activities, (iii) having the self-help skills, (iv) showing appropriate behaviors in the class, and (v) expressing him/herself.

There are a number of studies showing the need for teaching the critical skills before placing the child with developmental disabilities into the inclusion environments. There are also studies which show the importance of the skills especially found to be essential for children with developmental disabilities in the literature. These studies can be grouped as: following the directions in the group activities (Chandler, 1993; Chadwick & Kemp, 2002; Foulks & Morrow, 1989; Kemp & Carter, 2006; Sainato & Lyon, 1989; Noonan & McCormick, 1993). Hains, 1992; Rule et al., 1990), raising hand to get permission for doing the activities, talk in the class, etc. (Chadwick & Kemp, 2002; Kemp & Carter, 2000; Chandler, 1993; Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Noonan & McCormick, 1993; Odom & Bailey, 2001; Salisbury & Vincent, 1990; Vincent et al., 1980 cited in Noonan & McCormick, 1993; expressing him/herself (Anderson-Inman et al., 1984 cited in Sainato, & Lyon, 1989; Chandler, 1993; Noonan et al., 1992). When the literature was reviewed, only one research study was found which examined the opinions of teachers about the critical skills (Chadwick & Kemp, 2002). Also, Eripek (2000) conducted a meta-analysis on the studies about inclusion in the last 20 years.

As a result, it is hoped that the present study will extend the literature about the critical skills to be taught before placing children with developmental disabilities into regular classes. It can be said that it is very essential for these children to be placed after they are taught the critical skills in the special education environment by the special education teachers.

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## EK 1

Değerli Meslektaşım,

*Bu anket uygulamasının amacı, sınıfınızda eğitim alan veya alacak olan gelişimsel yetersizlik gösteren çocukların sahib olmasını beklediğiniz becerile-re yönelik görüşlerinizi belirlemektir. Örneğin, sınıfınıza Down Sendromlu bir öğrenci kayıta tırıldığında, bu öğrencinin hangi becerilere sahip olmasına arzu edersiniz? Sizden alınacak bu bilgiler, gelişimsel yetersizlik gösteren çocukların yeni eğitim alacakları sınıfa uyumları için gerekli becerile-re öğretimine yönelik planladığımız araştırmanın temelini oluşturacaktır. Görüşleriniz, araştırmamızın sağlıklı yürümesi ve özel eğitim alanına katkı getirmesi açısından oldukça önemlidir. Ankete katılımınız gönüllülük ilkesine dayanmaktadır.*

*Cevaplarınızın gizliliğinden ve isimlerinizin açıklanmayacağından kesinlikle emin olabilirsiniz. Çalışma ile ilgili olarak akliniza gelebilecek tüm soruları cevaplamaktan ve ayrıca istedığınız takdirde anket sonuçlarını çalışma bitiminde sizinle paylaşmaktan büyük mutluluk duyacağım.*

*Katkılarınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederim.*

*Saygılarımla*

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Mezun olduğunuz üniversite ve program:.....

Mezuniyet yılınız: .....

Kaç yıldır okul öncesi öğretmenliği yapıyorsunuz?

**1.** Öğreniminiz sırasında gelişimsel yetersizlik gösteren çocukların eğitimine yönelik eğitim aldınız mı?

Evet ( )      Hayır ( )

**2.** Eğer aldiysanız ne olduğunu belirtir misiniz?

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.....

**3.** Hizmet içi eğitim kapsamında gelişimsel yetersizlik gösteren çocuklara yönelik eğitim aldınız mı?

Evet ( )      Hayır ( )

**4.** Eğer aldiysanız ne olduğunu belirtir misiniz?

.....  
.....  
.....

**5.** Sınıfınızda gelişimsel yetersizlik gösteren çocuk/çocuklar var mı?

Evet ( )      Hayır ( )

Yanıt "Evet" ise devam edilecek, "Hayır" ise 9. sorudan devam edilecek.

**6.** Sınıfınızdaki gelişimsel yetersizlik gösteren çocukların hangi özür grubunda olduğunu belirtir misiniz? (Birden fazla işaretleme yapılabilir.)

Zihinsel Yetersizlik ( )    Ortopedik Yetersizlik ( )    Otizm ( )  
 Özel Öğrenme Güçlüğü ( )    İşitme Yetersizliği ( )    Dil ve Konuşma Güçlüğü ( )  
 Görme Yetersizliği ( )    Üstün veya Özel Yetenek ( )

**7.** Gelişimsel yetersizlik gösteren çocuklar ile ilgili olarak destek hizmet aldınız mı?

Evet ( )      Hayır ( )

**8.** Eğer destek hizmet aldiysanız, hangi tür olduğunu işaretler misiniz? (Birden fazla işaretleme yapılabılır.)

Sınıf-içi yardım ( ) Özel eğitim danışmanlığı ( ) Kaynak oda ( ) Diğer ( )  
Belirtiniz.....

**9.** Sınıfiniza yerleştirilen gelişimsel yetersizlik gösteren çocukların akademik, sosyal ve davranışsal özelliklerine ilişkin bilgi sahibi misiniz?

Evet ( ) Hayır ( )

**10.** Eğer yanıtınız evetse, bu bilgiyi nereden edindiniz?

RAM ( ) Üniversite ( ) Özel eğitim kurumları ( ) Diğer ( )

MEB ( ) Kendi çabamla edindim (kitaplar, dergiler, TV vb.)

Belirtiniz.....

**11.** Sınıfinında eğitim alan ya da alacak olan gelişimsel yetersizlik gösteren çocukların sınıfınıza daha kolay uyum sağlayabilmesi için birinci derecede önemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz üç beceriyi sıralar misiniz?

- .....
- .....
- .....

**12.** Yukarıda sıraladığınız üç beceri kadar olmasa da, ikinci derecede önemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz diğer üç beceriyi sıralar misiniz?

- .....
- .....
- .....

**13.** Verdiğiniz cevaplara ek olarak belirtmek istediğiniz görüş ve önerileriniz var mı?

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